

The Cheerful Letter

EVERY PLACE A CHURCH; EVERY DAY THE LORD'S DAY; ALL EVENTS BLESSINGS; ALL JOY
THANKSGIVING; AND ALL NATURE AND LIFE FULL OF GOD.—James Freeman Clarke.

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THE CHEERFUL LETTER.

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LABOR.

Pause not to dream of the future before us,
Pause not to weep the wild cares that come
 o'er us;
Hark, how Creation's deep musical chorus,
 Unintermitting, goes up unto heaven.
Never the ocean wave falters in flowing,
Never the little seed stops in its growing;
More and more richly the rose-heart keeps
 glowing,
Till from its nourishing stem it is riven.

Labor is worship! the robin is singing;
Labor is worship! the wild bee is ringing;
Listen—that eloquent whisper upspringing
 Speaks to thy soul from out nature's great
 heart.
From the dark cloud flows the life-giving
 shower,
From the rough sod blows the soft-breathing
 flower,
From the small insect, the rich coral bower;
Only man in the plan shrinks from his part.

Labor is life—'Tis the still water faileth;
Idleness ever despaireth, bewaileth;
Keep the watch wound, for the dark rust as-
 saileth;
Flowers droop and die in the stillness of
 noon.

Labor is glory! the flying cloud lightens;
Only the waving wing changes and brightens;
Idle hearts only the dark future frightens;
Play the sweet keys, wouldst thou keep
 them in tune.

Labor is rest—from the sorrows that greet us,
Rest from all petty vexations that meet us,
Rest from sin-promptings that ever entreat
 us,
Rest from world-sirens that lure us to ill.
Work—and pure slumbers shall wait on thy
 pillow;
Work—thou shalt ride over Care's coming
 billow;
Lie not down wearied 'neath Woe's weeping
 willow;—
Work with a stout heart and resolute will!

Droop not, though shame, sin, and anguish
 are round thee;
Bravely fling off the cold chain that hath
 bound thee;
Look to yon pure heaven smiling beyond
 thee!
Rest not content in thy darkness—a clod!
Work—for some good—be it ever so slowly;
Cherish some flower—be it ever so lowly;
Labor! All labor is noble and holy:—
Let thy good deeds be thy prayer to thy
 God!

—Frances Sargent Osgood.

THE LAST NIGHT OF THE YEAR.

"And at midnight there was a cry made, Behold, the bride-
groom cometh; go ye out to meet him."—MATTHEW xxv. 6.

The cry is heard to-night; it has been
heard again and again this year by many.
It comes in the depths of our darkness: at
midnight it is heard, waking us as men are
wakened by an earthquake.
"At midnight!" It is a word of comfort
to some. When all is darkest, and the sleep
of sorrow and pain is heaviest, when our
gloom is deepest, our doubt most torturing,
our heart most torn with care: when our
ship of life is most tossed in starless night by
the tempest of life, then look up and lift up
your heads, for your redemption draweth
nigh. When the pain is sorest the child is
born, when life is at its worst the deliverer
comes.

The great light that we shall see lingers long. But it lingers that we may be wrought into inward power; all the Christian graces are made strong by patience. Perfect peace is only won by long waiting on the Lord. By untiring faith which believes even when hope has veiled its eyes; by unwearied love which labors for man even when we seem most forgotten by God, which clings to God in the midst of the deepest darkness and the keenest pain; by resignation which watches with gentleness through the awful hours of life—are we trained to full enjoyment, full assurance. Passive endurance, active perseverance, these are the two sides of the shield of Christian watchfulness. And when the work of all these is done on the soul, then, and not till then, the Bridegroom comes.

Are we ready for these things, our lamps alit, our loins girded, and we ourselves as those who watch for their Lord, lest, coming suddenly, he find us sleeping? We ask this question on this last night of the year. For on such a night as this when, in the silence in which we pray, we desire to give ourselves, body and soul and spirit, into the hands of God, to be a reasonable, holy, and living sacrifice unto him—we hear, coming out of the caverns of the dying year, its last dim, solemn voice to us—"Behold, the Bridegroom cometh; go ye forth to meet him." Are we ready or unready? If God should come to us in sorrow, or insistent duty, or in desperate trial, or in the overwhelming of joy, or in disease, or in death, shall we be prepared to meet him with tended lamps? Readiness or unreadiness, these are the two deciding things which settle judgment, to which the parable speaks home.

There is a solemn choice in life. Life and death, light and darkness, truth and lies are set before us. At every instant the cry comes for us to choose one or the other, and the choice of one involves the putting aside of the other. And we must choose. That is one of the certainties of life. There is no such thing as offering one hand to God and another to evil; one hand to the self-sacrifice of Christ, another hand to the covetousness of the world. You cannot serve God and Mammon. You cannot follow Jesus at home, and your own pleasure in your outward life. Your life, whether you like it or not, becomes of one piece.

Make your choice. Choose the Fatherhood of God; choose to be his child; choose goodness, truth, love, purity, mercy, faith, and hope; choose the life of Christ on earth; choose the peace and joy of the Spirit of your God. Then blest indeed will be the last hours of this year. The old time we loved,

in which we knew and loved so much, suffered and rejoiced, learnt and unlearnt so many things, is dying in the night. Let us spend our last hours in lighting our lamps, that we may go forth to meet our Master with wakeful eyes and ready hands in the coming year, to work with him for the redemption of mankind.

Let all the past die with it. Bury its evil deep; hide it in the grave with Christ, and go in resurrection power to meet him in Galilee. We may claim forgiveness if we are resolute to do the evil thing no more. We may claim the power to work if we are determined to drift and idle no more. We may claim God's good-will in our hearts as ours if we will lay aside the doing of our own wrong will. These are mighty and glorious claims; but we have, I thank God, the right to make them upon our Father. So joyfully begin, and when you hear the bells to-night, be happy. They will ring out the false and ring in the true for you; ring out all evil lords within your soul, and ring in the true Master—Jesus Christ our Lord.—*Stopford A. Brooke*

THE STILL HOUR.

SHORT PRAYERS.

Our Father in Heaven, may we work out our salvation with fear and trembling, not counting ourselves to have attained; may we forget the things which are behind, and reach forth unto those which are before, doing all things without murmuring or disputing.

May we watch and be sober; may we put on charity, which is the perfect bond; may we comfort one another, and edify one another; not returning evil for evil, but following ever that which is good.

May we rejoice evermore, pray without ceasing, and in everything give thanks; may we prove all things, hold fast that which is good, and abstain from all appearance of evil.

Help us to look into the perfect law of liberty, and continue therein, and so to receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to them that love him.

THOUGHTS FOR THE STILL HOUR.

Every morning before we cross our threshold, before we make a single plan for the day, we must give ourselves to our Father's busi-

ness. We are not to determine what we will do and then devote it to God, but we are first to devote ourselves to God and ask Him what we shall do.—*Alex. MacKenzie.*

The true happiness of man consists in being united to God, and his only misery in being separated from him.—*Plato.*

Let us do good unto all men.—*Gal. vi. 10.*

The best thing to give your enemy is forgiveness; to an opponent, tolerance; to a friend, your heart; to your child, a good example; to your father, deference; to your mother, conduct that will make her proud of you; to yourself, respect; to all men, charity.—*Mrs. Balfour.*

They did cast in of their abundance; but she of her want did cast in all that she had, even all her living.—*Mark xii. 44.*

"The Holy Supper is kept, indeed,
In whatso we share with another's need;
Not what we give, but what we share,—
For the gift without the giver is bare;
Who gives himself with his alms feeds
three,—
Himself, his hungering neighbor, and me."
—*J. R. Lowell.*

THE BOOK AND MAGAZINE CLUB.

Send all offers and requests for this department to Mrs. W. B. Nichols, 25 Fairmount Way, Quincy, Mass.

Please remember, when you see a request for a book in the Book Club, to write a card to Mrs. Nichols, asking "Shall I send such a book to such a person?" before sending it, else the person who requests it may receive several copies. When any one writes directly to you, asking for a book offered by you, send a card to Mrs. Nichols, saying that you have sent it. When you receive more requests than you can meet, send these to the Book Club to be printed here.

OFFERS.

Cambridge First Parish offers the following books. Apply to Miss Helen L. Bayley, 399 Broadway, Cambridge, Mass.:—

"Seven Stormy Sundays"; "Studies in the Gospel of Mark," Burton; "Essentials in English History," Walker; "History of the United States," Ellis; "The Story of Columbus and Magellan"; "Life of Washington," Everett; "Venetian Life," Howells; "Redgauntlet," Scott; "Silas Marner"; "Under the Red Robe," Weyman; "Harry Heathcote, of Gangoil," Trollope; "A Little Pilgrim in the Unseen," Mrs. Oliphant.

For Boys and Girls.

"Three Vassar Girls on the Rhine," Champney; "Harry Blount," Hamertin; "Lucy at the Seashore," Abbott; "Posies for Children"; "The Cruise of the Snow Bird," Stables; "In the High Valley," Coolidge; "Where there's a Will there's a Way," Haven; "Papa's Little Daughters," Brine; "Aunt Charlotte's Golden Gift."

Books offered by Hawes Branch: D. G. Putnam, 557 Fifth Street, South Boston, Mass.:—

"Grammar," Kerl's; "History," Anderson; "General History," Myers; "History of Sandwich Islands"; "Physiology," Cummings; "Manual Phonography," Pitman; "Gems of the White City" (pictures of Chicago World's Fair); "Chorus Choir," Tourjee; "Life of Ezra Gannett," Lyson; "Life of Elizabeth Prentiss."

Fiction.

"Eternal City," Hall Caine; "Man from Red Keg"; "Path in Ravine," Ellis; "Table Talks"; "The Rhine," Victor Hugo.

REQUESTS.

Those who write to us for the first time must send the name and address of a minister, as a reference. Without that the request will not be printed.

1. Mrs. R. L. Pratt, Sandy Ridge, Stokes County, North Carolina, wants the *Christian Herald* beginning with May, 1914.

2. Miss Mollie Craddock, Price, North Carolina, Route 1, Box 34, would like the *Cheerful Letter*.

3. Mrs. N. B. Cobb, Kerr, R. F. D., North Carolina, an invalid confined to the house, will appreciate the *American* or *Cosmopolitan*, and for her daughter would like "Ivanhoe."

4. I wish to thank each one through the dear little paper for reading which has been sent us. We appreciate anything, as we have moved from the dear old State of Virginia to a place where all are strangers to us. We will be more thankful than ever for any reading. Novels of any kind for girls will be so thankfully received, or books of educational instruction, as we were compelled to keep the girls from school to put them to work to earn our support, their father being paralyzed from a fall. My address is changed

from Critz, Virginia, to Spray, North Carolina. Mrs. James R. Brown.

5. Mrs. Emma Blankenship, Sandy Level, Virginia, asks for "Gospel Hymn Book" and a drawing book and pencil.

6. Mrs. Annie Cooley, Knowles, New Mexico, and her little seven-year-old daughter are lonely, Mr. Cooley having died during the summer, and they, in a lonely neighborhood, particularly feel the need of cheer.

7. Mrs. W. R. Ratcliff, Athens, Texas, asks for the *Cheerful Letter* and "Only a Girl's Heart."

8. I can make use of anything for little folks up to the 3rd Reader Grade. My own little children and six others are isolated from schools. There is no school for any of us nearer than ten miles. We are too far apart to form a school. The sight of Indians, mountains, rolling prairies, cowboys, etc., might be new to your Eastern children. They are common to our children. But toy shops, pretty books, cards, pictures, etc., do not grow out here and are unfamiliar to our boys and girls. Out here "half the world does not know how the other half lives" is a true saying. Mrs. Fred A. Nelson, Dupuyer, Teton County, Montana.

9. I have received some reading matter in the past for which I was deeply grateful, as I enjoyed it so much, but have not received any of late. I have been married since I last wrote you, my name having been changed from Miss Gertrude E. Pedigo to Mrs. A. P. Boyd. I still receive my *Cheerful Letter* paper and enjoy reading it very much. I should love to receive some good magazines, books, or any good reading matter; I would especially like the *Ladies' Home Journal*, after some one has read it. And I would also like to receive some little picture books or cards for my little boy who is two and a half years old. I wish to thank all the good people who sent me reading matter in the past, especially the lady who sent me the *To-day's Magazine*. I have a mother-in-law, Mrs. H. A. Boyd, who is an invalid, and not able to leave her room, and I would appreciate very much if some one would remember her with some suitable reading matter. Mrs. A. P. Boyd, Vinton, Virginia.

10. Would some one please send me the *Delineator* and some books for my two little children, aged three and five years? I would appreciate reading of any kind. Refer to

Rev. Walker Decker, Lahore, Virginia. Mrs. Fannie Thompson, Tatum, Orange County, Virginia.

11. Please let me thank the donor of the *Cheerful Letter*. I appreciate it greatly. I have been in poor health and since my operation have not recovered from the effects as yet, though I am better. Am in my home nearly all the time so would love to have a few papers to read for myself and five children; the oldest boy, thirteen, would like the *Youth's Companion*, after some one finishes reading it. Please send me some pieces of calico or woollen for a quilt, if not asking too much. Mrs. George L. Raynor, Box 31, Speonk, New York.

12. Miss Katherine Pettit is now at Pine Mountain Settlement School, Pine Mountain, Kentucky, and will be glad of suitable reading.

REMOVED.

Mrs. Albert Owen from Danbury to Sandy Level, Virginia.

DIED.

Mrs. Louise H. Goodwin, Sandidges, Virginia.

Mrs. Adalaide Woffard, Athens, Texas.

Mrs. J. Hall Weixler.

Miss Amy E. Lane, Stockton Springs, Maine.

Mrs. A. A. Cochrane, Rochepot, Missouri.

Will any one corresponding with or sending to the Swaringee family of Albemarle, North Carolina, please communicate with Mrs. W. B. Nichols, 25 Fairmount Way, Quincy, Mass., before continuing with this family?

THE MOTHERS' COUNCIL.

AFTER THE VACATION.

After the summer scattering, which is more and more a feature of American life, homecomings take place in the early fall. Business which has partially relaxed its grasp begins with renewed zest, children have finished their vacation and feel the impulse of a fresh start, while mistress and maid resume together the responsibilities of carrying on the home. Within the last decade the good custom has gradually become familiar of giving a vacation to the domestic staff.

Surely, if any one needs the benefit of a break in the fixed routine, it is the cook who spends her time over gridirons and sauce-

pan, the house-maid, the laundress, the waitress or the general servant whose day begins early and ends late, and who is an important factor in the machinery of the household.

We are constantly reminded that the wages paid to maids are high, and that many of them are deficient in appreciation of the privileges they receive. Both these assertions are true. As to the item of salaries, the houseworker is very much better off than the young woman who stands behind the counter or at the loom, since board and lodging are included in the money paid her.

Still, she does not always have a home included with the room that shelters her and the fare provided for her table. That is an ideal home-coming for the family which is shared by the maid and completed by her cordial gladness to see her employers again at home.

As we know by experience, there is often something a little flat in returning to our own abode after a pleasant outing. This could be avoided by thoughtful planning.

It surely would be possible for some member of the family to go in advance to a house that has been closed for weeks, meet the returning maid, if there has been no resident care-taker, and see that rooms are aired, drains properly flushed, and the house put into festival order for those who are hurrying back to it. Let the first meal be not a haphazard meal, but a real feast, with dainty dishes in the nature of a treat, so that the home-coming may take on something of the warmth and the charm of an anniversary.—*Margaret E. Sangster.*

Two young girls were seated together in a street-car, and in the eagerness of their conversation their voices were raised higher than was becoming in a public conveyance. A middle-aged woman who sat near them felt inclined to give them a hint, but hesitated for fear of receiving a rude answer. Finally she decided to undertake the mission; and carefully considering her words, ventured to suggest that they were speaking a little louder than they knew; adding that it was easy to forget, when interested, that we may unconsciously raise our voices.

The girls had the good sense not to be offended, and received the hint good-humoredly. Soon after, the same opportunity occurred; but this time, the lady received so rude an answer that she never repeated the experiment.

Another young girl who received a gentle hint from an older woman as to something

that might be improved in her manners, told her mother of the incident the same day; and the mother said, "I hope, dear, that you remembered to thank her." She had forgotten to do so, and now realized, with contrition, that she had lost an opportunity.

Every one sees the faults of young girls; only a few persons have the courage to speak directly to them of things that others criticise severely. How much these girls would gain, if they knew how graceful, how lovely it is, how it marks the true lady, to be able to accept an admonition from an older person.

NATURAL HISTORY.

WHAT THE BIRDS AND SQUIRRELS FOUND OUT.

"This bitter cold weather is very hard on the birds and little animals in the grove," said Papa Vance one cold night. "We have had snow on the ground for a long time, and they will starve unless a thaw comes."

"Why, papa, I thought the squirrels always laid away plenty of nuts," said Dorothy. "Mamma said they carried them away to hollow trees."

"But you remember, my dear, the snow came before they had a chance to get plenty of food," said papa. "When we have an open winter, which means the ground is bare, the squirrels can dig under the fallen leaves even in winter and find food. The birds eat weed seeds and all sorts of things they find, but when snow is deep they often go hungry."

"Let's feed them to-morrow, Dorothy," said Fred. "I'll scatter a lot of crumbs so they can have a feast."

"Won't the crumbs be lost in the snow?" asked wise little Dorothy.

"I am afraid they will, but the birds are too timid to come to the house where the ground is bare."

"We'll sweep a nice bare place under the trees," said Dorothy. "I don't want the birds to starve."

So early the next morning the children took two old brooms and hurried to the grove. It was hard work, and they were soon panting, but the thought of the hungry birds kept them at the task even though their arms ached, and presently a nice, big table was all ready.

"Now for the wheat and crumbs," cried Fred, hurrying back to the house. "Breakfast will be served a little late this morning, but we can do better to-morrow."

Fred and Dorothy crept behind some big trees, and presently a bird flew down on the

table. Another and another came until there were crowds of hungry boarders, as Dorothy called them, eating their breakfasts. It must have tasted very good, for they chattered and seemed to have a fine time with the crumbs and wheat.

After that it was great fun to watch the table when the meals were served. Rabbits, birds, squirrels, and even a stray cat came to enjoy the crumbs when the weather was very cold, and it took a great deal of food to keep the tiny bodies from freezing.

"I don't like it that the birds are all afraid of us," said Dorothy. "They all fly away whenever we come near."

"They will learn to trust you in time," said papa. "They are timid little creatures, and want to be sure you are their friends."

In a short time it was hard to get the tablecloth off without a lot of boarders camping on the table, as the children said when they had to brush off a new fall of snow. The little things found out that the children never would harm them, so all winter they flocked to their meals when they saw Fred and Dorothy coming. The children are planning to open their boarding-house under the trees again this winter, and I wish there were hundreds of such kind little people all over the land during the bitter cold weather.—*Hilda Richmond, in The American Primary Teacher.*

BIOGRAPHY.

LA FAYETTE.

Gilbert Mottier de La Fayette was born at the castle of Chavaniac, in Auvergne, on the 6th of September, 1757. His family was one of the most ancient in the country, and of the highest rank in the French nobility. As far back as the fifteenth century, one of his ancestors, a marshal of France, was distinguished for his military achievements; his uncle fell in the wars of Italy, in the middle of the last century; and his father lost his life in the Seven Years' War at the battle of Minden.

His mother died soon after, and he was thus left an orphan at an early age, the heir of an immense estate, and exposed to all the dangers incident to youth, rank, and fortune, in the gayest and most luxurious city in the world, at the period of its greatest corruption. Yet he escaped unhurt. Having completed the usual academic course at the college of Du Plessis, in Paris, he married, at the age of sixteen, the daughter of the Duke d'Argen, of the family of Noailles, somewhat younger than himself, and at all

times the encourager of his virtues, the heroic partner of his sufferings, the worthy sharer of his great name and of his honorable grave.

The family to which he thus became allied was then, and for fifty years had been, in the highest favor at the French Court. Himself the youthful heir of one of the oldest and richest houses in France, the path of advancement was open to him. He was offered a brilliant place in the royal household. At an age and in a situation most likely to be caught by the attraction, he declined the proffered distinction, impatient of the attendance at court which it required. He felt, from his earliest years, that he was not born to loiter in an ante-chamber. The sentiment of liberty was already awakened in his bosom. Having, while yet at college, been required, as an exercise in composition, to describe the well-trained charger, obedient even to the shadow of the whip—he represented the noble animal, on the contrary, as rearing at the sight of it, and throwing his rider. With this feeling, the profession of arms was, of course, the most congenial to him; and was, in fact, with the exception of that of the courtier, the only one open to a young French nobleman before the revolution.

In the summer of 1776, and just after the American declaration of independence, La Fayette, not then nineteen years old, was stationed at Metz, a garrisoned town on the road from Paris to the German frontier, with the regiment to which he was attached, as a captain of dragoons. The Duke of Gloucester, the brother of the King of England, happened to be on a visit to Metz, and a dinner was given to him by the commandant of the garrison. La Fayette was invited, with other officers, to the entertainment. Despatches had just been received by the Duke, from England, relating to American affairs—the resistance of the colonists, and the strong measures adopted by the ministers to crush the rebellion. Among the details stated by the Duke of Gloucester, was the extraordinary fact, that these remote, scattered, and unprotected settlers of the wilderness had solemnly declared themselves an Independent People. These words decided the fortunes of the enthusiastic listener; and not more distinctly was the great declaration a charter of political liberty to the rising states, than it was a commission to their youthful champion to devote his life to the sacred cause.

The details which he heard were new to him. The American contest was known to him before, but only as a rebellion in

a remote transatlantic colony. He now, with a promptness of perception, which, even at this distance of time, strikes us as very remarkable, addressed a multitude of inquiries to the Duke of Gloucester, on the subject of the contest. His imagination was kindled at the idea of an oppressed people struggling for political liberty. His heart was warmed with the possibility of drawing his sword in a good cause. Before he left the table, his course was mentally resolved upon; and the brother of the King of England, unconsciously no doubt, had the singular fortune to enlist, from the French Court and the French army, this gallant and fortunate champion in the then unpromising cause of the colonial congress.

He immediately repaired to Paris to make further inquiries and arrangements, toward the execution of his great plan. He confided it to two young friends—officers like himself—the Count Segur and Viscount Noailles, and proposed to them to join him. They shared his enthusiasm, and determined to accompany him, but, on consulting their families, they were refused permission. But they faithfully kept La Fayette's secret. Happily for his purpose, he was an orphan, independent of control, and was master of his own fortune, amounting to nearly forty thousand dollars per annum.

He next opened his heart to the Count de Broglie, a marshal in the French army. To the experienced warrior, accustomed to the regular campaigns of European service, the project seemed rash and quixotic, and one that he could not countenance. La Fayette begged the Count at least not to betray him, as he was resolved, notwithstanding his disapproval, to go to America. This the Count promised, adding, "I saw your uncle fall in Italy; witnessed your father's death at the battle of Minden; and I will not be accessory to the ruin of the only remaining branch of the family." He then used all the powers of argument which his age and experience suggested to dissuade La Fayette from the enterprise; but in vain. Finding his determination unalterable, he made him acquainted with the Baron de Kalb, who, the Count knew, was about to embark for America,—an officer of experience and merit, who, as is well known, fell at the battle of Camden.

The Baron de Kalb introduced La Fayette to Silas Deane, then agent of the United States in France, who explained to him the state of affairs in America, and encouraged him in his project. Deane was but imperfectly acquainted with the French language, and was of manners rather repulsive. A

less enthusiastic temper than that of La Fayette might have been somewhat chilled by the style of his intercourse. Deane had not, as yet, been acknowledged in any public capacity, and was beset by the spies of the British ambassador. For these reasons, it was judged expedient that the visits of La Fayette should not be repeated, and their further negotiations were conducted through the intervention of Mr. Carmichael, an American gentleman, at that time in Paris. The arrangement was at length concluded, in virtue of which Deane took upon himself, without authority, but by a happy exercise of discretion, to engage La Fayette to enter the American service, with the rank of major-general. A vessel was about to be despatched with arms and other supplies for the American army, and in this vessel it was settled that he should take passage.—*From "Lives of Benefactors."*

(To be continued.)

THE WITHERED HAND.

At last it was New Year's Eve. Lill came home late from a merry party at Josie's, undressed in five minutes, said her prayers in five seconds or a little more, and went to sleep while she was getting into bed. How many hours passed she did not know, but suddenly she came back to consciousness feeling very uncomfortable, indeed. She opened her eyes, and was astonished to find that some one had lighted the gas and the room was full of people. There was Jane making a mustard paste, and cook bringing in hot water, and Dr. Banks—what on earth was he doing in her room at that time of night! Lill felt a little uneasy as she wondered what he thought of her front hair done up on hair-pins, and then she forgot it as she caught sight of her father at the foot of the bed looking so anxious, and her mother pouring something out of a bottle, and crying a little, too. What did it all mean?

"A most alarming attack of congestion," said Dr. Banks, dropping her wrist; "unless she is relieved very soon—"

He did not finish, but great tears fell upon Lill's face as her mother held the spoon to her lips, and Lill's mind began to work very fast, indeed.

"Some one must be very sick; I wonder who! It couldn't possibly be I! And yet what hard work it is to breathe! Congestion? Yes, that is the very way Emma died last winter, just in a few hours! And why shouldn't I—"

Lill's heart began to beat very fast, and

then seemed to stop a whole minute. "Oh, no! absurd! I am not going to die; of course they will do something to help me."

"I won't go!" she said in a paroxysm of terror, and she caught hold of the mother's dear hands with all the little strength that was left.

It didn't do any good. Lill's soul just went shivering right out of the poor little body; the room grew dimmer; the dear mother, father, kind old doctor, faded away. Lill was going, going,—where? She shut her eyes tight. On and on, through vast reaches of space; Lill could not tell how far, but it seemed a most heart-breaking distance from the dear old earth before she was conscious that motion had ceased. At the same time she also became aware, in some strange way,—for she had not yet dared to open her eyes,—that some one was bending over her.

"What ought to be done with her?" said a voice in the greatest perplexity, but so sweet and clear it made her think of the flute stop on the great church organ.

"There seems to be a little life," returned a soft, yearning voice, like Dulciana in the swell-organ; and thereafter Lill distinguished them in her mind by those names.

"But how very small she is," said Flute, in a tone of such regret.

"Let us measure her," suggested Dulciana; "I will bring the golden reed that measured the city."

Lill felt greatly annoyed that they should bring anything so grand. Of course, she would look very insignificant.

"We have no small measures in heaven," said Flute, who seemed to know everything that was passing in her mind without her saying a word.

There was a moment of dreadful silence; Lill felt as if she were shrinking into nothing.

Then Flute said slowly, "The very smallest babe in Christ I ever saw!"

"Oh!" groaned Lill.

"And then—!" continued Flute, with a kind of horror.

"Yes, besides that—!" said Dulciana, with unutterable sadness.

There was an awful pause. Lill's little mite of a spiritual body shivered with apprehension.

"Besides that," continued Flute, oh, so solemnly, "she has a withered hand!"

Not a word was spoken for a long time; it was too overwhelming.

"And that happened?" asked Dulciana, very softly at last.

"Because it never was used; because it never did anything for Christ, unless, per-

haps, to wound him, to make him a crown of thorns."

"Oh, never!" burst forth Lill, feeling herself perfectly outraged. "Why, I would have done anything for him if I had had a chance. Why, when—"

"Saw we thee a-hungred, and gave thee no meat?" finished Flute, "and naked, and clothed thee not?"

"Inasmuch as she did it not unto one of the least of these," said Dulciana, just whispering, it was so dreadful, "she did it not to him!"

How familiar the words were. Lill had certainly heard them often enough. The last time was at communion, and she remembered seeing Mrs. Meagher on the back seat, in such a thin shawl. But oh, she didn't, didn't think it meant just this! This was terrible! Mrs. Meagher! Was it possible!

"What can be done about it?" continued Flute.

"If she could only be back on the earth a little while," said Dulciana.

"If she would feed and clothe the poor and hungry, and give kind words and deeds to the souls sick and in prison, as soon as she stretched forth her hand to the Master it would be made whole."

"But I can't go back," thought Lill, with a thrill of despair. "Oh, if Jo only knew how grand and solemn it is to be alive! But I am dead. It is all over. What will be done with me?"

Suddenly there came a burst of such wonderful music, it seized and thrilled Lill with a rapture that was almost agony. There was a joyful tumult, in which Flute and Dulciana joined with an adoration beyond expression in their voices; and in some way it was conveyed to Lill that the Saviour was passing by.

"If I could only get to his feet!" sobbed Lill; and immediately she felt the wish realized; for there is scarcely any difference between wishing with all one's heart to be at Jesus' feet, and being there.

Lill could not speak, but she felt that everything there was in her went into one prayer—she was nothing but a prayer, such a prayer! laid at Jesus' feet.

But there was no answer, and Lill felt, with a despair no words could express, that he had passed by, he was going on.

"Let us follow the Master," said Flute.

"And Lill?" asked Dulciana.

"May go with us. He did not forbid it. You see," said Flute, looking sharply at her with angel's eyes, which can be microscopes when they please, "there is a little love, and a very, very little faith she may enter in through the gates into the city."

Yes, it was not forbidden; but nobody had said "Come, thou blessed."

"Now we are entering heaven," said Flute to Lill, whom he was carrying, she was so very feeble.

Entering heaven! Lill had often imagined how it would be; but this was so very different. She lifted her eyes, but dropped them quickly again, heavy with the excessive weight of glory. But in that momentary glance she had seen much. She had seen such happy beings. Some had been stoned and sawn asunder for Christ; some had gone up to heaven from the stake, a fearful chariot of fire; some had given all their goods to feed the poor; some had borne years of poverty and sickness with an exquisite patience; all had been anxious to do something to prove their gratitude and love to him who had done so much for them. All but Lill; she had not been ashamed to accept everything from Jesus, and do nothing at all for him. So mean! Lower, lower dropped Lill. Oh, to think of going into heaven hanging one's head and with a withered hand!

"Lill, Lill," cried some one. Lill ran faster. "Lill, my dear Lill!" and now came a hearty shake. "What is the matter? Why, how you are sobbing and crying!" and Lill's mother fairly cried for sympathy. "What have you been dreaming, and what makes you look at your hands so?" for Lill was solemnly examining all her pretty pink fingers, first on one hand, and then on the other. "Come, come, we must not begin to-day with tears. I wish you a very happy New Year, my dear. And do you know it is breakfast time, and you are not out of bed!"

Loud voices called mamma, and she hurried away, giving Lill a kiss, and whispering "Tell me all about it by and by."

Lill could hardly wait till she was alone to fall on her knees. Oh, how she thanked God! first, that she had the dream, and second, that it was only a dream. And then Lill did indeed make some resolutions for the New Year and all the rest of her life.

Josie, who lived near, came rushing in before she was dressed.

"A Happy New Year, Lill, and what did you get?"

"Oh, Josie," cried Lill, bursting into tears, for she was not yet quite clear whether she was in the body or out of the body, "did you know I had a withered hand? Oh, no," she cried, laughing in spite of herself at Jo's look of horror, "you don't know; sit right down till I tell you."

The recital was very graphic, with accompaniments of Lill's gestures and tears,

and Josie never joked a bit as she listened with big, serious eyes, till Jane appeared.

"Miss Lill, would you believe it, here's that tiresome Mrs. Meagher here again."

"Oh, hush, hush, Jane! don't say that," cried Lill, eagerly. "That isn't Mrs. Meagher at all; that is—Oh, I don't know exactly what I was saying. Tell her to wait a minute, I'll be right down."

"Lill," giggled the irrepressible Josie, as she flitted through the door, "if you only knew how you look. You've pinned on your worsted, and not a bit of hair to—"

Lill looked back a moment with such reproach in her earnest eyes. "Oh, Josie, if you had only had the dream, you would know I couldn't wait a minute to stretch forth my withered hand."—*Extract from Story by Lynde Palmer.*

"You are getting into years." Yes, but the years are getting into you,—the ripe, rich years, the genial, mellow years. One by one the crudities of your youth are falling off from you,—the vanity, the egotism, the isolation, the bewilderment, the uncertainty. Nearer and nearer you are approaching yourself. . . . Your purposes concentrate, and your path is cleared. On the ruins of shattered plans you find your vantage ground. Your broken hopes, your thwarted schemes, your defeated aspirations, become a staff of strength with which you mount to sublimer heights.—*Gail Hamilton.*

THE NEW YEAR.

What has the Old Year brought you, friend?

Joy and love and sweetness?

Then pass them along to others, friend,
That they to imperfect lives may lend

A little of your completeness;

For hearts should be brimming with hope and cheer,

And give no place to grief or fear,

When the New Year is dawning.

What has the Old Year brought you, friend?

Bitterness, tears and sorrow?

Then let them die with the Old Year, friend,
Or safe from the sight of the world defend,

That none your gloom may borrow;

For hearts should be brimming with hope and cheer,

And give no place to grief or fear,

When the New Year is dawning.

—*Emma C. Dowd, in the Congregationalist.*

Things which never could have made a man happy develop a power to make him strong.—*Phillips Brooks.*

THE AMUSEMENT COLUMN.

[Address everything relating to the Amusement Column to Mr. Henry A. Jenks, 45 Spring Lane, Canton, Mass. Contributors are requested to write on one side of the paper only. Write name and address plainly (not necessarily for publication), and send the answers to the puzzles on a separate slip of paper.]

I.

HEROES AND HEROINES.

In what books do they appear?

1. Captain Absolute.
2. Blanche Amory.
3. Harvey Birch.
4. Rose Bradwardine.
5. Sydney Carton.
6. Beatrix Esmond.

II.

THE MELODY OF MANY LANDS.

The answers are names of countries and cities which end in the word "land."

1. The land that we loved in our earliest days.
2. The land where our queer fish should go.
3. The land of a tax the parishioner pays.
4. The land that is far from the "Po."
5. The land that is somewhat inclined to push out.
6. The land that is closely kept in.
7. The land that was named for a lady, no doubt.
8. And the land of a Siamese twin.
9. A land that is verdant if names be correct.
10. A northern land, yellow and brown.
11. A land that is more to the west, we suspect.
12. And the land that with care is weighed down.
13. A land uninviting to wheels or to teams.
14. A land that with wine fills your cup.
15. The land that is bound to go under, it seems.
16. And a land that has lately turned up.
17. The land that was christened for anger or spite.
18. The land of a people more brave than polite.
19. The land that a skater will please.
20. And a land that is famous for cheese.
21. A land that is "shet," as some heedless ones say.
22. A land where the maize plant is known.
23. A land quite indefinite, no special way.
24. And the land that's Her Majesty's own.

The Beacon.

III.

CHANGED INITIALS.

I am a word of four letters, and am a synonym for to strike heavily.

Change my head, and I am ready money.

Again, and I am a mark used in writing or printing.

Again, and I am a deep wound.

Again, and I am a dish of meat chopped fine and cooked with potatoes.

Again, and I am to strike with a sounding blow.

IV.

INITIAL LETTER PUZZLE.

In the twelve sentences below appear as many words (one in each sentence) which, if found and written one below the other, will spell a greeting:—

1. The fire destroyed the house.
2. The air was full of smoke.
3. The forward pass was used during the game.
4. The leak was due to a broken pipe.
5. The yard was full of boxes.
6. The news was very pleasant for all.
7. The east wind was very raw.
8. The new man was very helpful about the store.
9. The year was full of sorrow for the poor man.
10. The evening star was very bright.
11. They are going south for the winter.
12. The race was very close.

V.

FAMOUS AMERICANS.

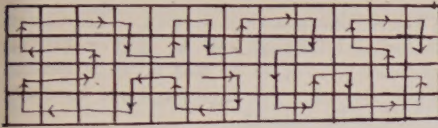
1. C—E—T—R — R—H—R, a president of the United States.
2. —E—R— —L—Y, an American statesman.
3. J—S—P— B—O—A—E—, an ex-senator from Ohio.
4. P—I—A—D—R— C —N—X, an ex-Secretary of State.
5. —N—H—N— W—Y—E, an American general.

Answers to puzzles in the December number.

I. FAMOUS EVENTS OF CHRISTMAS WEEK.

- 1. The attack on Quebec, Dec. 31, 1775.
2. The battle of Trenton, Dec. 25, 1776.
3. The death of George Washington, Dec. 31, 1799.
4. The dynasty of Bourbons ceased at Naples, Dec. 27, 1805.
5. The emancipation of the slaves, Jan. 1, 1863.

II. LABYRINTH OF LETTERS.



Orange, Camera, Skates, Books, Marbles,
Candy, Pictures, Games.

III. TWISTED CITIES OF NEW ENGLAND.

- 1. Manchester. 2. Augusta. 3. Worcester.
4. Pittsfield. 5. Springfield. 6. Burlington.
7. Portsmouth. 8. Waterville.

IV. CROSS-WORD ENIGMA.—Elihu Root.

V. A DIAMOND.—J

R A T
J A M E S
T E N
S

BELGIUM THANKS AMERICA.

To-day it's Christmas morning: we hear no
Christmas bell,

But still we tell the story which once we
loved to tell—

"Good-will," "Good-will"—we read it: and
"Peace"—we hear the name,

And crouch among the ruins, and watch the
cruel flame,

And hear the children crying, and turn our
eyes away,

For *them* there's neither bread nor home this
happy Christmas day.

But look! there comes a message from far
across the deep,

From hearts that still can pity, and eyes that
still can weep—

Oh, little lips a-hunger, oh, faces pale and wan,
There's somewhere, somewhere peace on

earth, somewhere good-will to man,
Across the waste of waters, a thousand leagues

away,
There's some one still remembers that here it's

Christmas day.

O God of Peace, remember, and in Thy
mercy keep

The hearts that still can pity, the eyes that
still can weep:

Amid the shame and torment, the ruins and
the graves,

To theirs, the land of freedom, from ours, the
land of slaves,

What answer can we send them? We can but
kneel and pray—

God grant, God grant to them at least a
happy Christmas day.

—Mme. Vandervelde.

During the recent destruction of Rheims Cathedral one wise saying was uttered. When the roof of the nave and the transepts caught fire, and high tongues of flame leaped up the panelling of the altars and the confessionals, the German wounded who had been carried into the cathedral would certainly have been burnt alive (by the efforts of their own countrymen) if several French army doctors and their bearers had not carried them, one by one, at their own risk, out of the church. A crowd had mustered around the blazing cathedral to watch the terrible spectacle. As these Germans in their uniforms appeared at the transept door, a howl of uncontrollable passion went up from the crowd. "*À mort!*" ("Kill them!"), they shouted. Some soldiers in the crowd deliberately charged their rifles and levelled them. Then Abbé Andrieux, the most gentle-mannered little priest that ever wore soutane, sprang forward between the wounded men and the muzzles that threatened them. "Don't fire!" he shouted. "You would make yourselves as guilty as they." The reproach was enough; and it was amid nothing worse than fierce hooting and angry cries that the Germans were carried to shelter near by.—*The Christian Life*.

It is worth realizing that there is no such thing as commonplace life or uninteresting circumstances. They are so only because we do not see into them, do not know them.

Take hold of work and duty with a firm, hearty grip. In all life's intercourse, whether of home or of the world, fulfil a loving, helpful part. And then shall life go strengthening, greatening all the way; and there shall be no death, but only some day, just as the laws of being bring it, a change, a passing on, and the unspoken word "to come up higher" into the next and finer stage of this wonderful life.—*Brooke Herford, in The Christian Life*.

I cannot meet each pang I see
With gratefulness that not on me
Has fallen that rod;
And make my fellow's agony
The measure of my love to God.

We feel in the spirit of saying not only "God bless our home," or "God bless our country," but "God bless everybody's home and everybody's country," and hasten the coming of a millennium of peace on earth to all God's creatures, both human and those we call dumb.—*Geo. T. Angell*.

THE CHEERFUL LETTER EXCHANGE.

OBJECTS.

1. To cheer and comfort the lonely and discouraged—not only invalids, but all who need cheer and comfort—by the interchange of letters and by gifts of books and periodicals.

2. To supply in some measure to young people in remote places the lack of schools, by gifts of school-books, letters, and, for those who desire it, correspondence classes on history, the natural sciences, and other interesting branches of study. If any desire to join such classes, they may send their names to our secretary.

3. Also to supply, to some extent, the lack of a church. One good sermon or sermon extract is printed in each number of the paper. These sermons are never doctrinal, but practical, and intended to cheer and comfort the sorrowful and aid in giving a vital religion without regard to sect or creed.

Any minister (of any sect) who receives this paper is cordially invited to distribute the copies of the *Cheerful Letter* received among lonely members of his parish, shut-ins, or invalids of whom he may know. He is also invited to write to our headquarters (see address on this page) and give names and addresses of those who may be cheered and helped by becoming our correspondents.

No *theology* is disseminated in our paper. All the religious matter is intended merely to strengthen, cheer, and comfort those in need of such practical help.

Givers of books are reminded that only books of instructive or wholesome nature should be offered in the Book Club. Classics, educational works, and standard novels are always acceptable.

HEREAFTER, ADDRESS ALL COMMUNICATIONS, INTENDED FOR THE CHEERFUL LETTER EXCHANGE, "THE CHAIRMAN, MRS. GEORGE G. SAVILLE, 25 BEACON STREET, BOSTON, MASS." THIS INCLUDES SUBSCRIPTIONS, CHANGES OF ADDRESS, REQUESTS FOR DISCONTINUANCE, BEGGING LETTERS RECEIVED BY MEMBERS OR BRANCHES.

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It is a rule of the Cheerful Letter Exchange that no one may ask for money, clothing, or other articles, except books and magazines.

The name of any person who fails to obey this rule will be dropped from our list. Any worker receiving such a request should send the letter at once to headquarters.

The Chairman, Mrs. George G. Saville, is at the rooms, 25 Beacon Street, on Wednesday afternoons, from 2 until 4.30 P.M.

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